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Senators ask Capone gangster about CIA

By RICHARD BEESTON in Washington

JOHN ROSELLI, 70, reputed Mafioso and former member of the Al Capone gang, was smuggled up a back stairs at the Senate yesterday to answer questions about the "Mafia connection" with a CIA plot to assassinate Senor Castro, the Cuban leader.

He appeared before a Senate committee, investigating Central Intelligence Agency conspiracies to murder foreign leaders, under strict security conditions following the killing of Sam Giancana, his former Mafia boss, last week.

Before a closed session of the Senate Intelligence Committee Roselli gave Senators their first first-hand account of the CIA-Mafia plot to kill Castro with poison and high-powered rifles.

Deportation efforts

Roselli is fighting Government efforts to deport him to Italy. His lawyers say he is willing to co-operate and to talk about the assassination plots.

According to evidence before

the Committee, Giancana and Roselli were approached by the CIA to murder Castro in 1960. The Committee was arranging to question Giancana when he was shot dead.

According to published reports Mr. Robert Maheu, a former Federal Bureau of Investigation agent, and once a top executive of Mr. Howard Hughes, the millionaire recluse, acted as the CIA-Mafia go-between. Mr. Maheu will give evidence later after being granted immunity from prosecution by the Senate Committee.

Havana gambling

Giancana and Roselli were reported to have been recruited by the CIA because of their extensive underworld links in Cuba and their gambling interests in Havana, which were seized by Castro.

The plot is said to have involved the recruitment of a gangster working for Castro who made an unsuccessful attempt to poison Castro in 1961 during the Kennedy Administration and who fled from Cuba just before the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion in the same year.